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AUTHOR Millar, Susan Bolyard
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ABSTRACT

This report examines the change process at a regional university in achieving a higher level of excellence in all its programs and activities. Results from 30 interviews are discussed in explaining how this university endured a major retrenchment and survived and thrived while simultaneously contributing to the surrounding community's economic development. The change process is discussed in terms of two types of "voices" or change perspectives: (1) the corporate voice, or that perspective representing active, resource management relying on established hierarchical relationships to achieve specified outputs; and (2) the democratic voice, or that perspective viewing the organization as a collection of valuable and interdependent moral communities where outcomes include the personal transformations experienced during dialogical interactions and improvements in social justice and overall quality of life within the communities. The interview results indicate that the university was well-served by "dialogical selves," i.e., those individuals who understood both corporate and democratic voices and who managed the tensions between them in creative and positive ways. Likewise, the university was weakened by "mono-selves," i.e., those individuals who focused exclusively on either their corporate or democratic voices. Contains 28 references. (GLR)

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Change at a Regional University:
The Dynamic Tension between Corporate and Democratic Voices

by Susan Bolyard Millar
Center for the Study of Higher Education
104 Charlotte Building
403 South Allen Street
University Park, PA 16801
(814) 865-6347

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Change at a Regional University:

The Dynamic Tension between Corporate and Democratic Voices

Abstract Interpreting open-ended interviews as expressions of "dialogical" selves, the author tells of dramatic improvements at a regional university by adopting two of the voices--"corporate" and "democratic"--articulated in individual interviews. She concludes that this university was well-served by "dialogical-selves"--individuals who understood both corporate and democratic voices and who managed the tensions between them in creative and positive ways, and was weakened by "mono-selves"--individuals who focused exclusively on either their corporate or democratic voices.

Change at a Regional University:
The Dynamic Tension Between Corporate and Democratic Voices[1]

Introduction

In 1984, Cody State University[1] was a mid-sized regional institution suffering from low morale, internal fragmentation, and a mediocre reputation. While more than 50 percent of the school age children in the region were ethnic minorities, the percent minority students and faculty at Cody State was only 24 and 13 percent, respectively. The state legislature found Cody State's performance as a university to be sufficiently weak that it considered revoking its university status. At the same time, Adobeton, the Southwestern town of some 100,000 people in which Cody State was located, was suffering from the recent departure of a steel mill. Unemployment had soared to more than 20 percent.

In 1991, Cody State published a 50-page full-color booklet entitled, The New Cody State University. The first page of text, printed alongside a photograph of the President, presents "The President's Message." I reproduce this message both as a cultural text, and in order to convey introductory information about the changes at Cody State. (Emphasis is in the original.)

> Approximately six years ago, Cody State University completed a rigorous self-evaluation and articulated its mission, goals, and priorities for the future. The change in direction has resulted in a dramatically different university today.

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The **new** Cody State University represents the combined efforts of faculty, staff and students who are committed to **excellence** in all programs and activities. This report will describe how that commitment to excellence has been actualized.

The university's accomplishments described herein have been realized **only** because we were willing, in the first instance, to make painful decisions regarding the number and types of programs to be offered. Simply stated, in 1984-85 the university was attempting to do too much with too little -- a common malady among colleges and universities today.

We faced the issue squarely, however, and we implemented a strategic planning effort which eliminated or reduced numerous programs and services. As a result, we were able to concentrate our existing resources in high priority areas.

We more than doubled academic support budgets, enhanced selected programs targeted for accelerated growth, and significantly reduced administrative costs. General administrative functions decreased from 21.8 percent of the non-scholarship portion of the Education and General Budget in 1984-85 to 12.1 percent in 1990-91.

Our strategic planning effort also raised the institution's admission standards, eliminated all two-year degree programs, eliminated remedial instruction, and, in general, achieved an over-arching commitment to the realization of true university status.

During the same six year period, unemployment in the town declined because 17 high tech

companies moved to the area, drawn, in part, by the significantly improved reputation of Cody State. In addition, by 1991 the percent ethnic minority students and faculty resumed its 1984 levels.

In these times of financial crisis in higher education, many readers may want to know just how Cody State endured a major retrenchment and not only survived, but thrived and contributed substantially to community economic development. At the same time, readers also may want to know if some voices were silenced during this change process. Is there another story that The President's Message left untold? And if so, what tensions lie in the contradictions implied by these different stories? What can we learn from the ways in which Cody Staters managed these tensions? In particular, what can higher education administrators who are attempting both to make their institutions more competitive and to increase the percentage of traditionally underrepresented groups learn from this dilemma?

Two Voices in Dynamic Tension

I address these questions by using some thirty interviews conducted at Cody State to expand on the short version of the Cody State story that appears in the first two paragraphs.[2] I tell this expanded version from two of the most salient perspectives presented in the Cody State interviews: a "corporate" and a "democratic" voice. Before telling the story, I describe each of these voices and the dynamic tension between them.

Corporate Voice The corporate voice, which is epitomized in The President's Message, is expressed by a self that is intent on "making something of itself."[3] The corporate voice verifies that it has "made something of itself" by its "outputs." It "achiev[es] recognition by performing effectively in a technological and professional world" (Wilshire

1990: 43). This self values efficiency and individualism. Driven by the force of will, it is an active, rational manager of resources, which include tools, symbols, knowledge, and people. In its endeavors to manage resources, it relies on the establishment of hierarchical relationships. In short, it is a strategic manager, using either linear, adaptive, or interpretive strategies (Chaffee 1985) and functioning in either tightly or loosely coupled systems (Weick 1976).

Democratic Voice The democratic voice is articulated by a self that engages in dialogical exploration of its own and others' assumptions, knowledge, and character. Motivated by a desire to actualize greater social justice in a moral society, it attempts to practice "obedience to truth" (Palmer 1983: Ch. 6).[4] It views itself as integrated into successively wider moral communities, stretching from close family and friendship groups to the world. Perceiving all entities, including itself, to be inherently valuable and interdependent, it participates in hierarchical relationships only when all parties agree that this is necessary to establish or maintain equilibrium within and between communities. The democratic voice evaluates the excellence of its actions by observing the effects on its own and others' experience. These "outcomes" include personal transformations experienced during dialogical interactions (both during face-to-face encounters and during encounters with texts), and improvements in social justice and overall quality of life within the communities in which these changed people act. Such outcomes often are difficult to measure as the direct outputs of specific actions.

A Dynamic Tension

Cody State, like all institutions of higher education, had to respond to a complex set

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of external and internal demands and expectations. For example, its own survival as a university and the economic welfare of the Adobeton region depended on its ability to correct the wasteful manner in which it was expending resources. At the same time, it had to respond to both moral and sociopolitical imperatives to find better ways to educate all students and, in particular, members of groups that systematically had been denied opportunity to participate in the university. The corporate voice was well-suited to responding to the first element of this imperative, while the democratic voice was well-suited to the second. At the same time, however, the corporate voice tended to work against the realization of the second imperative, while the democratic voice generally failed to further the first imperative. Therefore, a dynamic tension existed between the two voices.

First, consider the strengths and weaknesses of the corporate perspective. Actions taken in line with this perspective went a long way toward correcting the inefficiency that had plagued the university, and ensuring the continued flow of state and private resources. Critical to corporate action were strategies that transformed complex questions such as, "Are funds being used to educate students and develop faculty and staff in the most effective way?" into simplified data and discrete outputs that enabled legislators and others to make decisions about resource distribution. At the same time, many of these same strategies had the effect of silencing some voices. For example, when students and faculty proposed plans to enhance learning for its own sake and to include as faculty members highly knowledgeable underrepresented people without doctoral degrees, their voices were ignored. Fearing that implementation of these suggestions would vitiate its single-minded institutional efforts to achieve excellence as measured by the "outputs" it valued, the corporate voice silenced these

suggestions.

Second, consider the strengths and weaknesses of the democratic perspective. Actions taken in line with this perspective tended to incorporate members of underrepresented groups into the university. Critical to these democratic actions were interactive social processes that required much time and patience to develop, and were difficult to measure. But because these processes made demands on the same "human resources" that corporate voices utilized to produce much more easily measured outputs, increasing the resources dedicated to democratic processes was perceived as jeopardizing the support of legislators and others benefactors.

A Theory of the Dialogical Self

I have said that corporate and democratic "voices" were two of the most salient perspectives presented in Cody State interviews, and that these voices belong to "selves," rather than to "persons." I used this language because both of these narrative voices often were articulated by the same person during one interview. In other words, single individuals told different, often contradictory, stories, shifting smoothly from one voice to the other.

At first, I approached these interviews with the tacit assumption that each person would express a single coherent perspective, because he or she was the product of a coherent "self." In so doing, however, I produced a story of Cody State that I knew was unacceptable. The story was too simple, too good. The people who had critical views of the change--including almost all the Chicanos and a high proportion of the Anglo women--looked too much like "losers" in a social darwinist story. Reviewing my work, I realized that there were contradictory voices within many individual interviews and that I had largely erased all

but one of the voices in my attempt to match these interviews with my theory of a coherent self. Moreover, I had engaged in this reification in a systematic way by expecting Anglo women and Chicanos to critique the administration from "marginalized standpoints" (Smith 1990), and by expecting Anglo males to advocate uncritically the status quo. At that moment, I understood that I had begun to view these interviews in light of recent theories of a "dialogical self" (Gergen 1991, Hermans et. al 1992, Kondo 1990, Wertsch 1991).

According to these theories, the "dialogical self" shifts from one "I" position to another, as it responds to different situations or even evaluates the same situation from one moment to another. This idea is presented by Hermans et. al. as follows:

> ...we conceptualize the self in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I* positions in an imaginal landscape... The *I* has the possibility to move, as in a space, from one position to the other in accordance with changes in situation and time. The *I* fluctuates among different and even opposed positions. The *I* has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established. The voices function like interacting characters in a story...As different voices these characters exchange information about their respective *me*s and their worlds, resulting in a complex, narratively structured self. (Hermans et. al. 1992:27-8)

In the following pages, I present a story as articulated by two of the salient "I" positions in most of the 30 Cody State interviews. In so doing, I also indicate how Cody Staters managed the dynamic tension between these voices. In the concluding section, I suggest that some of Cody State's success depended on people who enacted corporate

perspectives and some depended on those who enacted democratic perspectives. I also suggest that the university benefitted most from people who understood both perspectives and managed the tensions between them in creative and positive ways. By bringing attention to the work of these people, I hope to help higher education administrators who are attempting both to make their institutions more competitive and to increase the percentage of traditionally underrepresented groups respond creatively to similar tensions on their own campuses.

Cody State's Dramatic Change in Two Voices

History and Setting

Cody State began in 1933 as Cody Junior College. At that time, it was a state institution, located in downtown Adobeton, which employed mostly former high school teachers. Adobeton had an ethnically mixed, working-class population, with families dependent on the local steel mill. In 1962, the legislature gave Cody Junior College responsibility for four-year programs, and during the next few years the newly-named Cody State College moved to its present hill-top location on the edge of Adobeton. In 1975, the legislature granted university status to what then became Cody State University. At the same time, it established a new downtown community college. The legislature's intent that only the community college would offer vocational and remedial courses, and only the university would offer college-level general education courses, was not implemented.

The Pre-Crisis Period

Reviewing the period beginning in the mid-1960s and lasting until summer 1984, most interviewee voices stressed one issue: the absence of good leadership. They criticized

institutional leaders for accepting new missions while retaining earlier ones and only partially incorporating the new ones. They stated that lack of cooperation between the leaders of both Cody State and the community college resulted in substantial duplication of programs. Many described how the Cody State faculty and a series of presidents expended "endless time and energy" in power struggles. One faculty member characterized the period as a time of "tremendous administrative instability... The Presidents just managed crisis, didn't have any vision." Others cited a contentious attitude on the part of influential faculty.

A primary value highlighted by the democratic voice was the need for commitment to the institution and, in particular, to students. This voice criticized the lack of commitment shown by the presidents during this period: "They were coming in here, worried about where they were going to be next, instead of where they are now, and the minute they got a chance they'd jump ship and leave unfinished projects." Some faculty and administrators said that it was the commitment of the faculty to the students that "kept the institution going" during those years. This commitment was animated by the identification the faculty felt with the students. One explained, "Many of us were the first persons in our families to ever go to college. It's a kind of working-class professoriate, and we see ourselves in our students." And another commented, "I think we've had an excellent learning environment here for students, no matter who--ethnic minorities or female, or whatever, long before the [reorganization]. The focus on teaching in this faculty has been dynamite."

Narrators using democratic voice expressed that they valued equality when they reflected on the racism and classism that characterized the pre-reorganization period. They noted that disdain for the technical programs in the Cody State curriculum was evident in the

university's nickname: Taco Tech. These voices indicated that no efforts were made to remedy the conditions that contributed to the underrepresentation of minorities and women. As one Chicano student who had begun attending in 1981 said, "For people like me, just coming to the university was like going to Mars... I think there was no sensitivity whatsoever [to my situation]." One Chicano faculty member observed that traditionally, Chicanos have seen Cody State as "a foreign place, where they didn't do well, [and thus felt that] it's not worth the effort."

As attention turned to the early 1980s, the corporate voice recounted that faculty, community leaders, and state officials had lost patience with the situation. Enrollment had declined and was expected to continue declining because of demographic shifts, the depressed economy, and Cody State's lackluster reputation. Many people described the place as "dust, weeds, and parking-lots." An alumnus observed that academic standards were perceived as low because "anyone with a G.E.D." could be admitted. Meanwhile, with high unemployment in Adobeton, community business leaders felt increasingly "fed up" with the wasteful duplication of programs at the community college and the university. City leaders, expressing corporate perspectives, explained that the town desperately needed "quality" institutions of higher education to attract new industries to the area, and that they had "brought pressure to bear." In spring of 1984, the legislature threatened to close the institution down unless the situation changed.

The Crisis Period

In summer 1984, the State Board intervened. They engaged an expert in strategic planning, reorganization, and program review to advise them on how to plan change at Cody

State. Corporate interviewee voices stressed that the consultant provided the Board with a change strategy based on the idea of developing a negotiated social order: Cody State's problems could be resolved by appointing a leader who, drawing on the visions of many, would craft a new vision and a strategic plan. The President of Cody State resigned two weeks after the retreat, and the Board offered the position of interim President to the consultant.

In negotiating the conditions of the new appointment, the Board sought "a complete reorganization of the institution," including the elimination of all two-year degree programs. It also wanted the new President to turn the institution into an asset for economic development of the region. Knowing that the elimination of programs would result in a major decline in enrollment and thus state funding, the consultant required that state funding be held constant at the 1984-85 level for five years. This "hold harmless" agreement would prevent him from being "punished" for succeeding. As the corporate voice saw it, the President's first action was to acquire and manage resources through negotiation: state officials would provide five years of protected funding if the new President would provide a reorganized university.

While the corporate voice dwelled on the negotiation processes in which the Board and President engaged during this crisis, democratic voices noted how the crisis affected certain groups negatively, and violated certain democratic values. The democratic voice observed that "there was a perception that the President had been mandated to take the 'taco' out of this university... that maybe there were too many Mexicans here, with the inference that they needed to make entrance requirements tougher." The state-mandated changes were

particularly threatening, this voice continued, because a relatively large proportion of the Chicano faculty and students at Cody State were in the vocational programs slated for elimination. Others using the democratic voice observed that the Board had taken a top-down approach to "problem-solving" that, in its very decisiveness, ensured that the strengths of traditionally excluded groups would remain unnoticed.

Recalling the President's arrival on campus, corporate voices repeatedly spoke of his skills as a negotiator. Immediately, he and the new president of the community college agreed to eliminate program duplication. Interpreting this as the first step toward developing a reputation as a town with a "quality" university and strong technical college, business people in the community began negotiating with the administration to "booster the university." They also initiated aggressive efforts to attract new businesses. Meanwhile, the President sought to enroll faculty, staff and students in the negotiated change process. He invited representatives of the faculty, staff, and student bodies to participate actively in three task forces charged with planning the reorganization. As one administrator explained, "The President used a clever strategy--to go directly to the most influential faculty and ask for their views of the problem." Task force membership was highly sought, with some units electing members.

The President clearly guided these task forces in their efforts to participate in the change. He told them the institution had been "trying to do too much with too little," and it was now time, "to be very hard-nosed, that this was an institution that needed revolutionary change, not evolutionary change... I told them, 'if we don't reallocate at least 20 percent of our base budget over the next three years, then we won't have achieved revolutionary

change.'" In addition, he included all academic and administrative units in the negotiation process by inviting them to submit written suggestions to the task forces. Three months later, the task forces presented, in the President's words, "bold and far-reaching recommendations."

In spring 1985, the President took formal action. He incorporated almost all the task forces' recommendations into his own reorganization proposal, and submitted it to the campus community for review. Those articulating democratic perspectives spoke of the disappointment and anger that Chicanos and Women Studies faculty and students felt upon seeing the recommendations to "mainstream" the Chicano Studies and Women's Studies programs. As they told it, the President's recommendations suggested that these programs' goals of developing better understanding among different groups were not highly valued in the new institutional reality being crafted at Cody State. Many people voiced strong objections to those recommendations at public hearings later that spring, and the Board accepted all the recommendations except the one to eliminate Chicano Studies.

The corporate voice, meanwhile, focused its attention on the vision articulated in the President's proposal, which was to "maximize the good of the whole by actualizing a commitment to excellence." The strategic plan intended to achieve this vision entailed "raising the institution's admission standards, eliminating all two-year degree programs, eliminating remedial instruction, and, in general, achieving an over-arching commitment to the realization of true university status" (The President's Message). Cody State was to become a "true university" by emphasizing individualistic achievement, merit, and selectivity, and by moving away from the "G.E.D." commonness associated with a

community college. It also was to become "one of the best regional universities in the country" (The New Cody State University, p. 45).

The "Revolutionary" Change Period

When recounting the story of the nearly six year period between fall 1985 and spring 1991, interviewees using the corporate voice characterized it as a metamorphosis; they painfully left behind their old "community college" form, and emerged as a "true university." Various community leaders, alumni, and administrators indicated that Cody State's ability to acquire a "quality reputation" was crucial to its metamorphosis. These corporate voices spoke approvingly of how the President cultivated a "strong, dynamic, successful image" for the university. As one alumnus observed, "The President built good relations with the business community, showcased the faculty, and did lots of image work, constantly sending external constituents a message that they were striving for quality." That the quality ideal by which these voices measured Cody State was that of a "serious" university was apparent in comments such as this one, made by a community leader:

> The community is so pleased, and frankly, amazed, at how this university has emerged from literally a vocationally-oriented junior college into a university. Granted, it has a long way to go. But it is no longer trying to be all things to all people--with the welding classes, and the basket-weaving... This university had to find its role for this region, and it had to move from an open-enrollment institution into an institution that was serious.

Indeed, during this period, state officials granted Cody State two "quality incentive awards," while national professional associations granted it "awards of recognition."

The performance indicators presented in The President's Message plus many other indicators of quality figured prominently in the corporate voice's story. For example, in order to eliminate all the two-year and remedial programs and weak four-year programs, 15 percent of the fulltime faculty and 40 percent of the administrative and support services employees were dismissed. As a result, student enrollment dropped from 4,500 in 1984-85 to 3,600 in 1986-87. However, enrollment returned to 4,300 students by fall 1991. Interviewees speaking in corporate voice attributed the rapid return of enrollment partially to "our higher quality programs." As one administrator put it, with over 20 percent of their budget reallocated to high priority programs, they could "get more instructional resources down into the classrooms" of the programs that remained.

Speaking in corporate voice, interviewees stressed that their more "serious" standards attracted better students and faculty and drew financial support from the community. As they established higher entry credentials and more demanding tenure and promotion expectations for faculty, they continued to make hard choices--even abolishing football--to foster the perception that the overall quality of the institution was increasing. This inspired community confidence, which was expressed in generous donations that produced a handsome capital campaign fund and transformed the "weed patch" campus into an aesthetically pleasing oasis. By amplifying strategic change in a continuous or circular pattern (Birnbaum 1988: Ch. 2), these changes then made the institution attractive to even more competitive faculty and students, which inspired yet more community confidence. As evidence of this confidence, corporate voices stressed that business leaders in Adobeton credited the "new Cody State" with their success in attracting 17 "very major and visible high tech companies" to the area.

Interviewees using corporate voice also spoke with approval of many "affirmative" administrative actions. They cited institutional data which showed that, by 1991, the proportion of minority students and tenured minority faculty returned to their pre-reorganization levels. One top administrator noted that he had "doubled salaries, changed titles, and asked people to apply, in some cases, in order to get people." A faculty member observed that they had "lost deans because of their failure to take effective action in this area." Others mentioned how, in 1990, the President appointed a committee of staff, faculty, administrators, and students to develop recommendations for promoting diversity.

Also crucial to Cody State's effort to become a true regional university was its effort to craft a new definition of excellence in research: they would reward research that was applied and regional in scope rather than theoretical and national in scope. As the corporate voice explained, Cody State faculty would achieve the same **type** of excellence achieved by faculty at national research universities, but would perform their work for a more local audience. This work also would be performed in accordance with understandings that university and community leaders had negotiated. As one administrator using corporate voice put it, "The President believes that institutions must serve the communities in which they reside. If they don't, there will not be any reciprocity from the community." By contrast, when the democratic voice spoke of this work, it focused on the development of relationships between university and community people that--more than reciprocity agreements--were generative sources of ideas and activity.

Those using democratic voice dwelled at length on how changes such as the new focus on applied research resulted in generative university-community relations. More

members of the Adobeton Chicano community had begun to feel comfortable on campus. People were feeling hopeful that the recently established Cody State/Adobeton District 5 Coalition would encourage a higher proportion of District 5 Chicano students to attend Cody State. This Coalition was developing close working relationships between university and school faculty. As one faculty member explained, "The purpose [of the Coalition] is to improve the educational system--thinking holistically--a K-16 concept." And a college dean who had become deeply involved with the Coalition with District 5 explained that these changes had,

> empowered us as an institution, and as teachers too...They have enabled us--university faculty, and public school teachers also--to do things together. We can do a lot of things by ourselves, but what we have captured [now] is the sense of the power that is in doing things together... And we're even looking at things globally now. We're saying, "what impact are we likely to have, as an experiment in Adobeton, involving this university and the school district?"

Returning to the corporate voice, administrators and faculty observed that the remarkable changes during these years had entailed considerable pain. It had been "a hard time," especially for those who were dismissed. Some spoke of lawsuits, noting that the university consistently won. Yet others observed that a few individual faculty and some entire departments remained "bitter." In this same voice, speakers opined that these "nay-sayers" needed to let go of their anger, and begin working "for the good of the institution." Articulating a social darwinist perspective, one biologist observed, "Change is difficult under the best of conditions, and being an ecologist, I figure you can either change, become

extinct, or leave--and I'd rather change." Other voices opined that those who did not participate in the new institutional identity and mission threatened to return them to the diffuse and fragmented "community college" period from which they were painfully emerging. As one person who identified strongly with the corporate voice put it, "There is a core of people who are unalterably opposed to the administration, who still carry the scars of the reorganization, are still bitter about it, and will never get over it. And that affects everything that they do."

Recalling this aspect of the "revolutionary" change, those using democratic voice described how a few Chicano faculty and others felt silenced. For example, they recounted how these faculty had proposed resource allocation policies that would lower faculty-student ratios and provide more counseling services in order to meet the needs of students "where they are," rather than where faculty and administrators thought they should be. They proposed faculty hiring and promotion policies and practices that placed less weight on degree credentials and more on practitioner experience. Such policies, they argued, were appropriate for an institution with a regional mission, and also would lead to more just results: an increased percentage of minority faculty and salaries for women that were commensurate with these faculty members' contributions. These proposals were not implemented. The democratic voice indicated that the people who made these proposals had not been part of any real dialogue with the administration. Rather than being participants in a dialogue, they had been the objects of it.

At the same time, democratic voices had many positive things to say. While some individuals voices remained excluded from the new vision, many who had been excluded in

the pre-1984 period now felt not only included, but actually liberated. An older faculty member, speaking in democratic voice, observed that the change that occurred during these years provided him,

> an opportunity to move away from just tending the store, just doing your job, just kind of overseeing things--what I call control issues--to being able to move into doing support things, like looking around and seeing what people are doing well, and finding - before they ask you for it - finding a way to help them do that even better... In the past, everything seemed to be top-down, and so hard... We've moved toward a model of trying to see what people are doing, and how to support that... And what are we supporting? We're supporting that teaching and learning process that's going on, and we're bringing the students into that too, and the faculty, around that whole idea... [It's like] you're freed, you're liberated, you know, to do what you have been trained and educated to do, and are capable of doing.

Others speaking in democratic voice told of how they had always believed that members of both their campus and town community could make important contributions, given an environment that affirms them--or at least does not actively obstruct them. And now they finally had the opportunity to enact this belief.

The "Evolutionary" Change Period (Corporate Voice Only)

Only the corporate voice spoke of a fourth period. According to this voice, Fall 1991 marked the debut of the "new Cody State." As one administrator put it, "Now our issues are not about 'what,' but about 'how.'" As the President noted, "The plan for the next five

years is truly evolutionary, compared to the revolutionary plan that came about in the first five years. Once you get things on track, then the evolutionary plan can be carried out with less dependence on one single individual standing at the front." Individuals using corporate voice communicated that those "on board" were enacting both their personal visions and the institutional vision. They described a decentralized network of leader-follower groups moving Cody State toward the realization of its shared vision of becoming "one of the best regional universities." Because the purposes of these leader-follower groups were aligned with the "shared vision," each was entrusted to function differently, according to its own talents and purposes.

Confident in both their separate activities and the strength of their shared vision, these groups felt free to disagree without fear of collapsing into a state of irreconcilable conflict such as the one they experienced in 1984. Far from seeing the disagreements among themselves as threatening, people speaking from corporate voice saw these as essential for the continued vitality of the institution (Varenne 1986: 227). During 1991, brisk discussions were in process about the allocation of resources (computers and daycare versus campus beautification); the wisdom of the administration's "merit" pay policy; the administration's tendency to become "top-heavy" again; how to best meet affirmative action goals and implement the various elements of the Cody State/District 5 Coalition plan.

Discussion

Corporate Voice Analysis

When analyzing the reorganization process, the corporate voice presented a story that had four chapters and a happy ending. These voices characterized the first chapter--the pre-

1984 period--as a time in which poor leadership led to a crisis. The second chapter, the 1984-85 "crisis," was triggered by an event that threatened the institution's identity: the legislature charged that it was too similar to a community college, that it was "a university in name only." Responding to this threat, the Board intervened by hiring a new president and instructing him to "clean house." This event jolted constituent groups out of their accustomed ways of perceiving the situation (Meyer 1982). Members of each group were forced to realize, on pain of losing university status, that they must abandon their own issues and allow a centralized figure to help them address a single set of "survival" issues.

The crisis having been established, some constituents perceived a potential for dramatic change. According to the corporate voice, the potential lay in the combination of the right situation, the right trigger, and the right key actor. The trigger redefined the situation as untenable; warring constituents would have to let go of their separate issues and focus on work together. The key actor was a President with a reputation as a leader, a strong mandate to reorganize the institution, and a "hold harmless" agreement with the legislature. A corporate "transformational leader"--one who sought to establish and achieve institutional goals, to "make something" of the institution--he helped Cody Staters "invent reality" together (Peters and Waterman 1982; Bennis 1984; Cameron and Ulrich 1986, Bensimon 1989). Under his leadership, most Cody Staters embraced a new social order. This order was based upon more individualistic values, and expressed in a definition of excellence that depended on the production of certain "outputs" (retention data, external funding data, and so forth). He crafted aspects of the personal visions of many individuals into a shared vision of a university that was both "serious" and responsive to regional

constraints and opportunities.

The "revolutionary" period, the time during which the reorganization plan was implemented, comprised the corporate voice's third chapter. This voice told of its continuing admiration for the President's courage and perseverance. It described a management strategy that Birnbaum called "flexible rigidity" (Birnbaum 1988: 146): the President was willing to compromise on means, but not on ends. As one administrator explained,

> The reorganization wouldn't have worked without very strong leadership, because first of all, it's a very painful process--with people losing jobs. It took an inordinate ability to articulate what we were doing, and to continue to articulate what we were doing--over, and over, and over again, and maintain your resolve in the face of all of this. And the major person articulating this was the President. He was the person who had to set the backbone for all the rest of us to act.

And by "the rest of us," these narrators meant Cody State faculty, students and administrators, and also Adobeton business and education leaders when they shared the President's vision of excellence.

Evaluating the current, "evolutionary," chapter of their story, interviewees in corporate voice spoke of having achieved a dynamic, cybernetic, equilibrium (Birnbaum 1988: Ch. 9). Decision-making, now distributed to leaders throughout the institution, was effective because coordinated by a shared, overarching negotiated social order. They had returned to a situation where it was more the faculty and less the President that "kept the institution going." And now, rather than expending "endless time and energy" fighting ineffective Presidents, their efforts were productive, focused by a shared vision, a "shared

commitment to excellence."

Democratic Voice Analysis

The analysis that democratic voices provided upon reviewing the changes that took place at Cody State during the last decade was far less definitive: both good and problematic changes had occurred, and it often was not clear just why events took the turn they did or just who was responsible for these changes. One thing that was clear, however, was that the institution had moved from one in which most people were distrustful and demoralized to one in which many people were supportive of each other and excited by the learning processes occurring in university and K-12 classrooms and laboratories, community internships and projects, and so forth. As one art professor perceived it, the importance of the change was that the administration now approached the faculty the way this faculty member approached his students: "create an environment--by removing obstacles, providing needed resources, establishing purposes--and then get out of the way." To the degree that the President encouraged and enabled these changes--which this voice clearly believed he did--he was more than a leader who merely who improved institutional effectiveness. He was a democratic "transformational leader"--one who "engage[d] with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise[d] one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (J. M. Burns, quoted in Tierney 1989: 158). He was, in Tierney's terms, someone who provided people "the opportunity to act, to move, and to change conditions" (Tierney 1989: 172).

When describing the period, the democratic voice focused on different kinds of changes than did the corporate voice. Rather than stressing how improvement could be measured by performance indicators (it "got more instructional resources down into the

classrooms"), it focused on how many people were now involved in generative relations. These voices became animated when describing applied research activities and the changed teaching/learning environments. Describing their new environment, these voices spoke of activities that they and their colleagues initiated. They pointed to opportunities, such as workshops on improving undergraduate teaching sponsored by the new faculty development director. They spoke with enthusiasm about projects which various departments shared with high school faculties.

At the same time, they found, in the words of one faculty member, that being "freed" as teachers, applied researchers, administrative staff, and students enabled them to become more attuned to one another. For example, as faculty became more attuned to and hence aware of students, their respect for the students grew. As one put it, "Most of our students have between 20-40 hours of work per week, and yet they're carrying a fulltime load. And I just deeply admire that... they're supporting families, some of them are supporting parents, particularly the Chicanos. And boy, when they're here, they're on business." Other democratic voices described similar processes during which faculty and students found they could learn from one another by attending to each other's voices with open and reflective attitudes. For example, faculty explained that they had come to value collaborative approaches to teaching. They learned that by attending to what students already know and how they learn, faculty themselves learn from the teaching process. The students, in turn, described how easily they learned from faculty who ignored traditional conventions that distanced them from their students.

Becoming more attuned to one another, these Cody Staters also began to work with

each other in a dialogical fashion. A vignette illustrates this process. When Chicano students established a student organization in 1990, they criticized the administration for having failed to initiate the kinds of activities that their own organization had begun to sponsor. However, in working with members of the administration, both administrators and students learned to recognize and let go of their own inaccurate, simplified assumptions about each other. From there, they learned by working together. They realized that, had the administration arranged activities for them, the students would have felt excluded, yet again, from the decision-making processes. Learning this together, the administrators and students created an environment where they could attend to one another's complexities or, in Palmer's terms, be obedient to each others' truths. Describing the results, a student leader explained that,

> when the changes come from the students themselves is when you make the difference... The [student organization] promotes leadership. Three or four of our members are now part of the Senate, whereas I think a year ago they wouldn't have had the confidence or self-esteem to be in that position, and would probably be on the other end of the spectrum. And now they are achieving actualization. They are achieving what is due to them.

Analysis

The strategic plan formulated by the President was designed to achieve a type of excellence modeled by national research universities, and based on values of individualistic achievement. This was apparent from the kinds of quality indicators against which Cody State measured its performance. Policies were designed to help Cody State acquire a

reputation as a more selective and competitive institution. Indeed, the administration welcomed creative faculty and staff proposals, so long as these proposals promised to help Cody State perform at higher levels when measured against these status quo indices of excellence. And it often rejected proposals that implied a return to the community college model. It could not afford "to be all things to all people."

The proposals for change put forth by those speaking in democratic voice challenged some of the values that shape research universities, and sought changes that may not have improved Cody State's performance, as measured by indicators used by research universities. At the same time, their proposals were not necessarily motivated by a desire to return to a "community college" model, and may not have resulted in the kind of institutional performance commonly found at such institutions. However, the administration's choice to reject those democratic proposals implied that it perceived only two possible visions for Cody State: research university or community college. The idea that these other proposals might be motivated by a different vision of excellence had limited visibility in the imaginal landscape of this administration. To develop a vision of a university that was not modeled on existing prototypes required the kind of dialogue between genuinely different voices that leads each to become more reflexively aware of its own ways of making sense (Palmer 1983: 31). It appeared that this type of dialogue had occurred only occasionally.

A key to why relatively little such dialogue occurred lies in understanding the relationship between imaginal and cultural landscapes. Changes in the one domain result in actions which mediate change in the other.[5] As Palmer put it, "The self creates the world by forging it into the limits of our own capacity to know" (1983: 12). For example, the

corporate voice's intent to actualize in Cody State's cultural landscape just one type of excellence enacted changes in the imaginal landscapes of many individuals. Individuals whose "I" normally fluctuated freely between corporate and democratic voices found it increasingly necessary to privilege only one voice, thereby collapsing the multiple, relatively autonomous "I" positions within their mental landscape into either a corporate or democratic "mono-self."

This collapse was mediated by cultural actions. For example, individuals at Cody State classified each other with blanket phrases, such as "that core of unalterably opposed people," or "that racist administration." Upon hearing themselves described this way, some people responded by identifying themselves with these phrases, thereby silencing their own dynamic multiple identities. In the Cody State instance, some people who were inclined toward a democratic voice thereby were reduced to "outsiders," by virtue of being among those who were not "on board" with the President's "shared vision." This reification of identity immediately was apparent in these individuals' actions. The complexity of their identities having been reduced to mono-self outsider identities, these people engaged in aggressive/defensive actions which, in turn, enjoined those who frequently used corporate voice to reduce themselves to "insiders."

Once begun, this process proceeded in escalating aggressive-defensive actions. For example, at Cody State, "outsiders" accused the administration of perpetuating "self-serving manipulation and racism implicit in the structure of institutions of higher education." The administration, one "outsider" explained, "avoided external review processes," and attempted to "whitewash" its inadequacies with "Chamber of Commerce" type news releases. People

who had defined themselves as outsiders criticized the President for appointing an affirmative action director who was an "administration lackey," and "questioned the process by which people were asked to serve on committees." On their part, "insiders" accused the "outsiders" of misrepresenting data, and announced that these people had become irrational. They said it was "a pity" these people could not put aside their personal issues long enough to see that the insiders were working for the "good of the whole."

The outsiders constituted, in Foucault's terms, a source of "subjugated knowledges" (Foucault 1980, quoted in Bates 1989: p. 81). As such, they were in a position to perceive, and hence critique, the discourse and power enacted by the insiders (Bates, 1989, p. 144). In this, as in so many universities around the country, these outsiders acquired the power/knowledge of liminal people (Ruby 1982). Their very position as outsiders enables them to perceive the assumptions which inform the choices and enact the power of the insiders (Smith 1990). By refusing to join the insiders' happy consensus, the outsiders challenge and--simultaneously create--the boundaries that constitute the insiders' position as insiders. By articulating for insiders how they violate their own ideals and morals, the outsiders vivify the meaning of these ideals for the insiders and bring to bear moral and political pressures for change.

This subjugator/subjugated process for enacting change suggests that the collapse of complex selves into reified "insider" and "outsider" identities is a necessary structural feature of change. It implies that change must be reactive, with insiders identified with and defending the status quo, and outsiders identified with a threatening position and attacking the status quo. But this is not the only way to approach institutional change. Rather than

reducing our identities to simplified "insider" or "outsider" positions and perceiving those who are genuinely different as threatening, we can embrace our own dialogical selves, and perceive each other as resources for enacting dialogical and proactive change processes.

Conclusion

I conclude by returning to the higher education stories being told around the nation about planned strategic interventions designed both to make institutions more competitive (corporate voice) and to increase their percentages of traditionally underrepresented groups (democratic voice). Picking up a university weekly newspaper, we read statements such as, "In the process of approving necessary exceptions to the [hiring] freeze, we will keep a keen eye on our commitment to the recruitment and retention of outstanding women and minorities," followed a couple paragraphs later with statements such as, "In this process, maintaining and improving the academic quality of this University will be our first priority."[6] These strategic planning stories are very similar to Cody State's.

What does this story of Cody State's dramatic change tell these other institutions about how to manage the tensions between these two goals, as articulated by the two dialogical voices I chose to highlight in this paper? Agreeing with Cohen and March (1986), Birnbaum (1988), and Bensimon et. al. (1989), I argue that this Cody State story provides limited understanding of how to enact strategic change. As the participants themselves observed, Cody State had a combination of the right situation, the right trigger, and the right key actor. Most institutions will not be able to establish a suitable crisis, find a talented and heroic leader, and have the good fortune to have a legislature that grants a "hold harmless" agreement. Causal patterns in the "organized anarchy" of colleges and universities always

will be difficult to determine with much certainty, much less replicate in other circumstances. Hence, most institutions' stories will not end with Cody State's long list of improvements, as measured by the external indices.

More applicable are the lessons Cody State provides about the pitfalls of enacting change as mono-self insiders and outsiders, and the promises of enacting change as dynamic "dialogical" selves. We learn of the pitfalls implicit in enacting a mono-self identity by noting that when Cody State administrators focused too intently on predetermined, externally-defined standards of "excellence," they not only achieved greater efficiency and productivity, but also created alienated outsiders and privileged insiders. What, in the eyes of insiders, were well-intentioned efforts to "actualize" a "commitment to excellence" were, in the eyes of outsiders, "hard-nosed" efforts to manage people as "target populations." Cody State became more "competitive," but in the process also tended to alienate, rather than learn from, the underrepresented people they sought to attract. Just as I, intent on interpreting interviews as the expressions of coherent selves, had authored a story that reified the complexity of both social and imaginal landscapes, Cody Stater "insiders" and "outsiders," intent on authoring an overly simple theories about reality, silenced their own voices and impoverished their own story.

Likewise, we learn of the promises implicit in embracing dialogical identties by observing Cody Staters who were open to true dialogue. When these individuals embraced their own complex selves while learning to perceive others' complex selves, they not only enacted their democratic dreams, but also enhanced social justice in ways that were measurable by corporate indices of achievement. They achieved creative resolutions to the

tension between their democratic and corporate selves. For example, in defining research that is applied and regional in scope to be "excellent," Cody State bridged the fundamental organizational tension between achieving measurable corporate "outputs" and encouraging less easily measured democratic "outcomes." The process of developing and implementing this new definition of "excellent research" suited the democratic voice because it fostered generative relationships that corrected imbalances in society. At the same time, the applied research activity was productive in terms of externally-defined measures, which suited the corporate voice. In perceiving one another as resources for enacting dialogical and proactive change, these individuals creatively resolved a fundamental tension in higher education--without collapsing complex selves into reified insider and outsider identities.

It is well established that our universities need goals and strategies that help faculty, students, and administrators become more efficient and competitive. An extensive literature on strategic planning and leadership describes how university leaders establish excellence by setting standards, measuring accomplishments, and excluding those who fail to meet the standards (for reviews, see Chaffee 1985, Bensimon et. al. 1989). These are the measures that decision-makers can weigh when choosing how to allocate resources. But excessive focus on these strategies and measures creates mono-self insiders and outsiders, inevitably impairing our universities as democratic "spaces for learning" (Palmer 1983, Ch. 5).

It is less well established that our universities need to enable us to practice reflective openness--to "think in new ways about things [we] think we already understand" (Magner 1992: A16). Higher education researchers are beginning to suggest that we need to evaluate our excellence by the degree to which our teaching/learning practices enhance the welfare of

all members of our educational and larger communities (Palmer 1983, Blenky et. al. 1986, Oliver 1989, Wilshire 1990, Tierney 1991, Lather 1991). Such practices entail that we engage in generative relations which inevitably help people learn of their own and others' complexities and strengths. But exclusive focus on these practices is not practical in the world as it is currently structured. Among other things, the results of these practices are not easy to measure and report to legislators.

I propose that both Cody Staters and others in higher education might benefit from research on organizational change within the business and non-profit sectors that explores how strategic efforts to use "reflective openness" in order to meet corporate goals enables creative resolution to tensions. For example, Senge, in The Fifth Discipline, The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization, provides a lengthy discussion of how members of organizations can practice "reflective openness" in order to enhance communication, learning, and creativity within organizations (Senge 1990: 277-78). He provides many examples of corporations that have succeeded approaching dynamic tensions in a manner that both enhances the moral well-being of people within the corporate sector and society at large and achieves "bottom-line" corporate objectives. Nutt and Backoff (1992) describe similar tension-management practices that they have used in extensive consulting work in public and third sector organizations. Frost-Kumpf and Ishiyama (1991) explain how a "democratic" transformational leader of a state agency creatively bridged fundamental organizational tensions.

Meanwhile, for lessons on how to manage this dilemma in higher education, we may turn to turn to those at Cody State who created spaces where people who were truly different

learned of one another's--and their own--complex, narratively structured "selves" while developing practical solutions to "corporate" problems. In these dialogical "spaces for learning," Cody Staters experienced a richer awareness of their situations, and developed creative resolutions to the tensions between their dialogical selves. These resolutions resulted in both the improvements in "output" measures of academic "quality" sought by their corporate voices, such as the size of academic support budgets and numbers of degrees conferred, and improvements in social justice sought by their democratic voices, such as increased participation of underrepresented peoples.

Notes

1. Names have been changed to protect institution and interviewee identity.

2. These interviewees were selected, for the most part, by the administration. They included four full-time institutional administrators, two college deans and one half-time administrator (each of whom continued to teach), ten full-time faculty members--including three department chairs and the President of the Faculty, seven students, three "community leaders and observers," and three alumni who also spoke as community leaders and observers. The faculty were from all the different colleges, were varied by rank, and included two Hispanic males, one Hispanic female, and three white females. Of the students, two were Hispanic and one was Black. One full-time administrator was Black, and one community leader was Hispanic. Interviews generally lasted an hour and a half.

3. My reasons for stating that these voices belong to "selves" rather than "persons" are explained in a theory section below.

4. As Palmer uses this phrase, "obedience" refers to its Latin root, "audire," which means "to listen" (Palmer 1981: 43).

5. This relationship between the self, knowledge, action, and the world has been explored at length by Wertsch (1991). In this book, Wertsch draws on the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin to propose that "mediational means" shape both social and individual thought processes.

6. From PennState Intercom, March 5, 1992, Volume 21, Number 24.

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Change at a Regional University:

The Dynamic Tension between Corporate and Democratic Voices

Abstract Interpreting open-ended interviews as expressions of "dialogical" selves, the author tells of dramatic improvements at a regional university by adopting two of the voices--"corporate" and "democratic"--articulated in individual interviews. She concludes that this university was well-served by "dialogical-selves"--individuals who understood both corporate and democratic voices and who managed the tensions between them in creative and positive ways, and was weakened by "mono-selves"--individuals who focused exclusively on either their corporate or democratic voices.